

JOCHELSON, THE KORYAK.

103

or his shadow, depart into the underground world of the shadows, — ancient people, people of former times (Peni'nelau). The entrance into this country is guarded by dogs. If a person beat his dogs during his life, he will not be admitted. These dog-guardians may be bribed, however. For this purpose, fish-fins are put into the mittens of the deceased, that they may give them to the dogs that guard the entrance of the world of the shades. The Peni'nelau live in the underground world in villages, just as human beings live on earth; and relatives live together in the same house. Every new-comer joins his own relatives. The inhabitants of the underground world take care of their relatives on earth by sending them animals, which they kill, and other kinds of food-supply; but they also punish them if they are displeased with them for one reason or another. Presents for dead relatives are put on the pyre when the body of a deceased person is burned. In Tale 43 it is stated that the deceased sent a kala to kill the inhabitants of a village because the young people used to play at night, and disturbed the old people. 775

As may be seen from many tales, the road leading from earth to the underground world seems to close soon after the passing of the dead. The deceased pass underground through the pyre, and the road closes behind them. In Tale 112 Big-Raven's (Quikinn'a'qu) daughter purposely permitted herself to be eaten by a cannibal in order to reach the country of the shades, and to bring back, before the road closed again, all the people that had been eaten by the cannibal.

The shadow of the dead, though not visible to all, is conceived of as an absolutely material double of the dead person. It is distinct from the body, of which only the bones are left if the person was eaten by the cannibal kala, or the ashes if the body was burned on the funeral pyre. In former times, communication between our world and the world of the dead was more frequent and less difficult than it is now. Men used to go down on purpose, or strayed there by accident, entering through a crevice in the ground, and came back again. At present, only shamans descend into the underground world.

In olden times, children killed their aged parents. This custom, which still prevails among the Chukchee, is now completely abandoned. In some places, even the recollection of this custom has disappeared. The Maritime Koryak, for instance, deny ever having done so. They insist that this custom prevailed only among the Reindeer Koryak. 888

The relatives take good care of a dying man. If he is able to eat, he is given the choicest pieces. If the agony lasts long, he is turned on his left side, because they think that thus he will die sooner. If there is another patient in the same house with the dying man, the soul of the former is tied, to prevent its joining the departing soul. For this purpose, the patient's neck is fastened to the bands of the sleeping-tent by means of a string; and the string is charmed so that it may detain the soul. 763

763 The person is declared dead when breathing ceases. Then word is sent from the house where the deceased is lying to all the inhabitants of the village. This is done in the following manner. The messenger ascends to the entrance of each house, and shouts, "Set out a noose!" (Nupālhata!) This is done for the purpose of preventing the spirit of death, or the spirit of the deceased, from entering into other houses. The messenger is asked from within the house, "Who is dead?" and he tells who has died, and goes away. Thereupon a blade of grass or a splinter, which represents a noose, is placed near the head of the ladder. One of the relatives of the deceased holds the head of the dead on his knees until all the inhabitants of the village have been informed. Little children are kept in their mother's or grandmother's arms. After all the neighbors have been informed, the deceased is placed on his bed. In Kamenskoye I was told that the deceased is laid by the side of his former bed. Somebody closes his eyes, and his face is covered with a fur robe. It is a sin to look at the face of a dead person.

Among the Reindeer Koryak, as soon as some one dies, a messenger is sent to the neighboring camps, informing them of the death that has occurred. The sleeping-room cover is removed from over the deceased in the house of the Reindeer Koryak, and the body is covered with a blanket.

764
171 FUNERALS. — The Koryak dispose of their dead by burning.¹ The Kamchadal, according to Krashennnikoff, prior to embracing Christianity, threw away their dead to be devoured by dogs. The Chukchee, to the present time, use both methods of disposing of the dead. They are either burned, or kept to be devoured by wild beasts. The Yukaghir formerly placed their dead on platforms raised on posts.² The Kerek who live near the mouths of the rivers emptying into the Pacific Ocean, between Capes Anannon and Barykoff, and who have no timber or driftwood for building a pyre, let their corpses, dressed in funeral attire, down into the ocean. They tie the deceased on a long pole, tow it out into the sea, and then push the body into the water with staffs.

764 In former times, all work in the entire settlement was stopped before the burning of the dead. No one went hunting or sealing, nobody went to fetch wood, and the women did no sewing. At present this custom is not observed

¹ Owing to this circumstance, it is impossible to procure Koryak skulls. In the spring of 1900 an epidemic of measles was ravaging the Koryak camps, carrying off numerous victims. Several large families were reduced to only one member. In some camps of the Reindeer Koryak there were so many dead, and such a small number of people who were in good health, that the latter were unable to burn all the dead. They would therefore carry their dead into the wilderness, where they would leave them, together with the reindeer sacrificed to them. Unfortunately it was very difficult to find the remains of the corpses, because, during the entire period of my stay in that region, the whole country was covered with deep snow. Moreover, the Koryak concealed the place whither they had taken their dead. Thus it happened that I found only one whole skull and parts of two others.

² Both the Yukaghir and the Koryak forms of funeral occur among the North-American Indians. The custom of throwing away the dead to be eaten by dogs is met with, according to Przevalski and Potanin, among the northern Mongols, and in ancient times used to be practised by the Parthians, the Hyrcanians, and the Persians (Jevons, p. 203).

515

CLEANLINESS. — The Koryak can by no means be classed among cleanly people. With extremely rare exceptions, resulting from the civilizing influence of the Russians, they do not wash. The faces of children, as well as those of old people, are covered with a layer of dirt and soot mixed with fat, so that it is difficult to determine the natural color of their skin. Only the girls and young women washed their faces before coming to us to be measured. Mucus from the nostrils is almost always a decoration of the children, and the older people are frequently not far behind them in this respect.

262
515

[763]

The kettles in which the food is cooked are full of reindeer and dog hair, which fall from the clothes and fill the air of the Koryak house. The Koryak kill lice, which are regarded by them as properly belonging to a healthy man, with their teeth. There is a prevailing belief among them, as well as among the Yukaghir, that when a man is deserted by lice he will soon die. They eat also the large larvæ which develop from the eggs deposited by the reindeer-flies in the hair of the reindeer. No matter how putrid food may be, the Koryak have no aversion to it, and they will even drink the urine of persons intoxicated with fly-agaric.

164

DISEASES. — Among non-contagious diseases, the most frequent are derangements of the digestive organs, caused by irregular nutrition and the use of putrid fish and meat. Complaints of pain in the stomach are frequent, and the Maritime branch of the tribe especially suffer from the tape-worm. Tetter, scabies, and other skin-diseases, are very common, owing to their filthy habits.

[732]

Diseases of the eyes — such as inflammation of the lids, or an affection of the cornea — are widely spread. This is to be attributed to the action of smoke in the underground houses of the Maritime Koryak, and to the reflected light of the snow in the spring. People suffering from conjunctivitis and cataract are frequently met with; but I saw only three cases of blindness during my travels, and the three so affected were people of middle age. From the Report of 1884, by Dr. Uspenski, the district physician who visited some Koryak settlements and camps, there were found, in 70 houses visited, 14 persons suffering from cataract,¹ which is a large percentage.

158

The Koryak are not subject to nervous diseases to the same extent as other arctic tribes, though some are afflicted with symptoms of the two forms of nervousness so frequently met with in the Arctic region. These two forms are widely prevalent among the Yukaghir, Tungus, Yakut, and also among the Russian immigrants. They are generally known by the Yakut names of meryak and menerik; but there are specific names in all the languages of the arctic tribes, not only for these two diseases, but for their various symptoms as well.² However, it is probable that these two forms of nervous suffering are symptomatic manifestations of arctic hysteria.

¹ Taken from the Government Archives of Gishigtnak.

² A more detailed description of these diseases will be given in my work on the Yukaghir.